

1870, but who afterwards degenerated into one of the hack politicians of the Third Republic, was chosen in preference to himself.<sup>1</sup> He had anticipated it, but he was resolved to offer himself for election at each fresh opportunity. "I am making history, literary history," he would say after one and another rebuff. "So much the worse for the Academy! Our grandnephews will learn that it refused me admittance twenty or thirty times in succession."

After "La Bête Humaine" in the summer of 1890, Zola turned to "Le Argent," a tale of the Paris financial world, inspired chiefly by the crash of the Union Générale Bank some years before. Of all the subjects he had hitherto approached he found this the most difficult to treat. He had no financiers among his friends, he had never dabbled in Bourse gambling, and was at a loss for information respecting much of the inner working of what the French call *la haute langue*. However, while frequenting the Bourse almost daily for a whole month, he obtained enlightenment from some gentlemen of the stock-broking world, to whom he was introduced. He also studied the detailed reports of the great swindles of previous years, going back as far as the time of the notorious Mire's, which was, of course, le-

gitimate, the period of his story being that of the Second Empire. One may add that in writing his book he did not spare some of the Jew financiers of Paris. "L'Argent" appeared serially in the "Gil Bias," which paid twelve hundred pounds for the privilege, and was issued as a volume in 1891.<sup>2</sup> Goncourt mentions that while Zola was writing

<sup>1</sup> At subsequent elections he was defeated by Pierre Loti, Henri do Bor-nier, Thureau-Dangin, Ferdinand Brunetiere, etc.

<sup>2</sup> "L'Argent," Charpentier, 1891, 18mo, 461 pages. Some copies on Dutch, India, and Japanese papers; eighty-third thousand in 1893; eighty-ninth thousand in 1903.